

Making a presentation

Improve your communication skills /
Alan Barker. -- 2nd ed. page 94-115

Introduction

- Think of a presentation as a formal conversation.
- Speaking to groups is a notoriously stressful activity.
- Most people spend hours of their time holding conversations.
- Something strange seems to happen, however, when they're called upon to talk to a group of people formally

What do you fear most?

- Ex.
 - Please list the three things that you fear most in order

What do you fear most?

- A recent study in the United States asked people about their deepest fears. The results were interesting. Here they are, in order:
 - speaking to groups;
 - heights;
 - insects and bugs;
 - financial problems;
 - deep water;
 - sickness;
 - death;
 - flying;
 - loneliness;
 - dogs.

Why presentation is hard

- The main causes of this anxiety is that you put yourself on the spot when you present.
- The audience will be judging, not just your ideas and your evidence, but you as well.
- People may not remember reports or spreadsheets easily, but a presentation can make a powerful impression that lasts.
- If the presenter seemed nervous, incompetent or ill informed, that reputation will stick – at least until the next presentation.

How to be effective

- To become more effective, you need to take control of the three core elements of the event:
 - the material;
 - the audience;
 - yourself.

Putting yourself on show

- How we get nervous?
 - That nervous, jittery feeling is caused by adrenalin.
 - This is a hormone secreted by your adrenal glands (near your kidneys).
 - Adrenalin causes your arteries to constrict, which increases your blood pressure and stimulates the heart.
 - Why stimulate the heart? To give you extra energy.
 - When do you need extra energy? When you're in danger.
 - Adrenalin release is an evolved response to threat.

Putting yourself on show

- Adrenalin has two other effects. It increases your concentration particularly useful when making a presentation.
- Less usefully, adrenalin also stimulates excretion of body waste.
- This decreases your body weight, giving you a slight advantage when it comes to running! That's why you want to visit the toilet immediately before presenting.

Putting yourself on show

- Your anxiety is probably more about your relationship with the audience than about what you have to say.
- In the moments before you present, you may find yourself suffering from one or more of the following conditions:
 - ■ demophobia – a fear of people;
 - ■ laliophobia – a fear of speaking;
 - ■ katagelophobia – a fear of ridicule.

Putting yourself on show

- Check your condition against this list of adrenalin-related symptoms:
 - rapid pulse;
 - shallow breathing;
 - muscle spasms in the throat, knees and hands;
 - dry mouth;
 - dilated pupils;
 - sweaty palms;
 - blurred vision;
 - nausea.

- Ex.
 - What happens to you when the adrenaline flow in your blood

Putting yourself on show

- The best news is that nerves are there to help you. They are telling you that this presentation matters – and that *you* matter.
- You are the medium through which the audience will understand your ideas.
- You *should* feel nervous. If you don't, you aren't taking the presentation seriously and you are in danger of letting your concentration slip.

Preparing for the presentation

- The trick is not to try to dispel the nerves, but to use them.
- Once you understand that nervousness is natural, and indeed
- necessary, it becomes a little easier to handle.
- Everyone is frightened of the unknown.
- Any presentation involves an element of uncertainty, because it's 'live'. You can't plan for the audience's mood on the day.
- You can't plan for any sudden development that affects the proposal or explanation you are giving.
- You can't plan for every question that you might be asked.

Preparing for the presentation

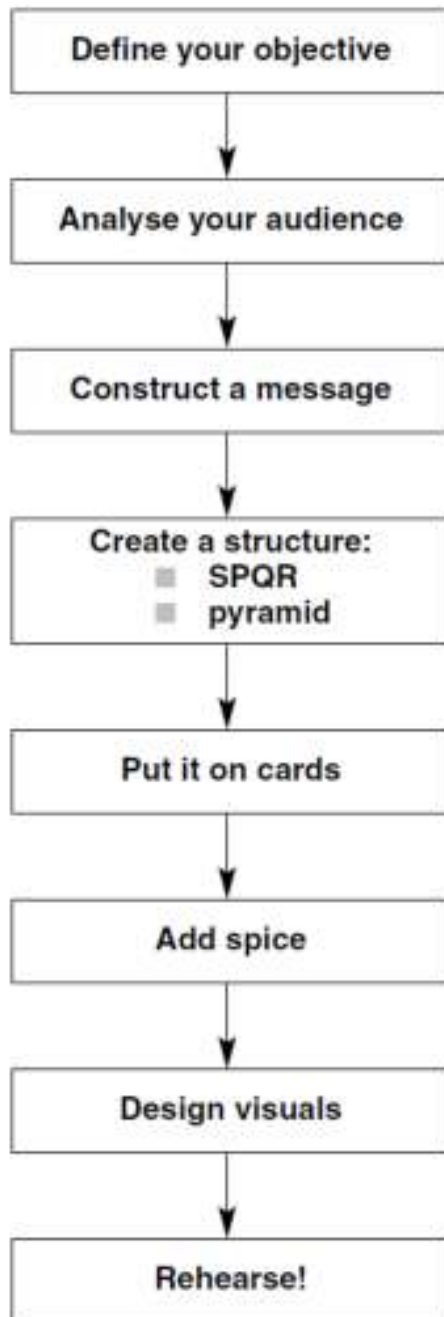
- Prepare well, and you will be ready to bring the presentation to life.
 - You can prepare in three areas:
 1. the material;
 2. the audience;
 3. yourself.

Managing the material

- Many presentations fail not because the presenter is weak, but because the material is disorderly.
- The audience tries its utmost to understand, but gets lost.
- You have to remember that they will forget virtually everything you say.
- They may remember rather more of what you show them, but only if it is quite simple.
- Don't expect any audience to remember, from the presentation alone, more than half a dozen ideas.

Managing the material

- In presentations, more than in any other kind of corporate communication, you must *display the shape of your thinking*.
- That shape will only be clear if you keep it simple.
- Detail doesn't make things clearer; it makes things more complicated.



SPQR
Situation
Problem
Questions
Response

Managing the material

- **Defining your objective**
 - Why are you making this presentation? That's the first, and most important, question you must answer.
- Everything else the material you include, its order, the level of detail you go into, how long the presentation will last, what visual aids you will use – will depend on your answer to this question.

Managing the material

- **Defining your objective**
 - What do you want your audience to take away at the end of the presentation?
 - More importantly: what do you want them to do? Your objective is to tell them everything they need to know to take that action – and nothing more.

Managing the material

- **Defining your objective**
 - Why is it a presentation? You could write a report, send a batch of e-mails, write a memo, put up posters, etc....
 - Why are you going to the trouble of gathering a group of people together in one place, booking the room, setting up the equipment and putting yourself through the torture of making a presentation? (answer this question)

Managing the material

- **Defining your objective**

- There's only one reason why you should be making a presentation. It may sound rather grand, but presentations are meant to inspire your audience.
- Your task is to bring your ideas alive with your own feelings, your own commitment, your own passion.
- If you act as if you don't believe in what you are saying, the audience won't believe it either.
- So, your objective must be to inspire your audience.
- If you have any other objective, choose another method of communication.

Write your objective down in one sentence. This helps you to:

- clear your mind;
- select material to fit;
- check at the end of planning that you are still addressing a single clear issue.

Write a simple sentence beginning:

'The aim of this presentation is to...'

Make sure the verb following that word 'to' is suitably inspirational!

- Ex
 - Did you ever made a presentation

Managing the material

- **Analysing your audience**
- Your presentation will be successful if the audience feels that you have spoken directly to them.
- If you can demonstrate that you have tailored your material to their needs, the audience will be more inclined to accept it.

- **Analysing your audience**

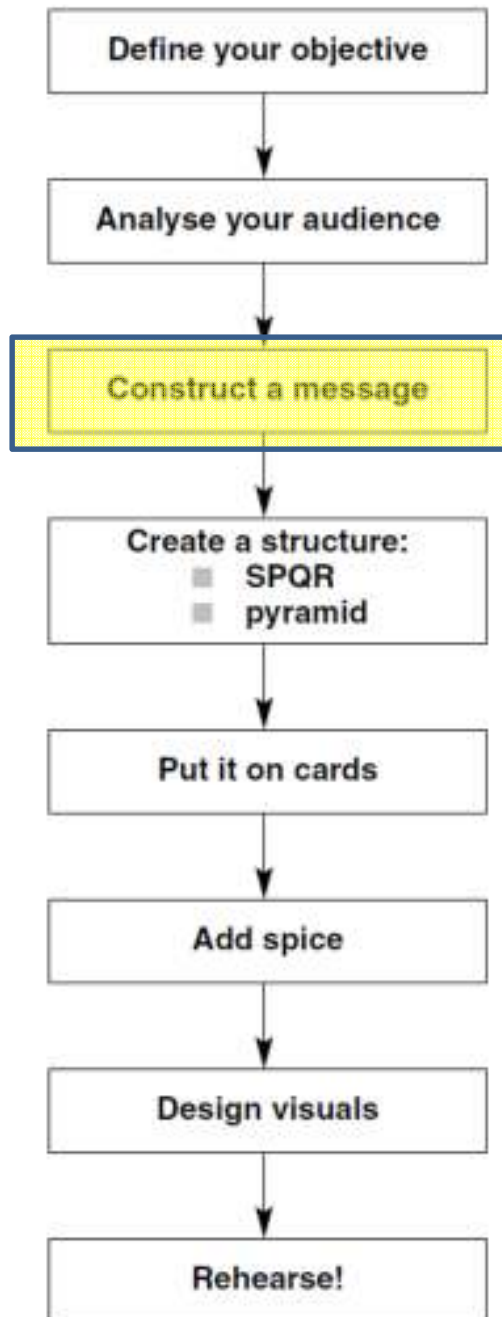
- How many will there be?
- What is their status range?
- Will they want to be there?
- How much do they already know about the matter?
- How much more do they need to know?
- What will they be expecting? What is the history, the context, the rumour, the gossip?
- How does your message and your material relate to the audience? Relevance defines what you will research, include and highlight. It will also help you to decide where to start: what your point of entry will be.

- **Analysing your audience**

- Is the audience young or old?
- Are they predominantly one gender or mixed?
- Are they technical specialists or generalists?
They will want different levels of detail.
- Where are they in the organisation? Different working groups will have different interests and different ways of looking at the world.
- Think, too, about the audience's expectations of the presentation.

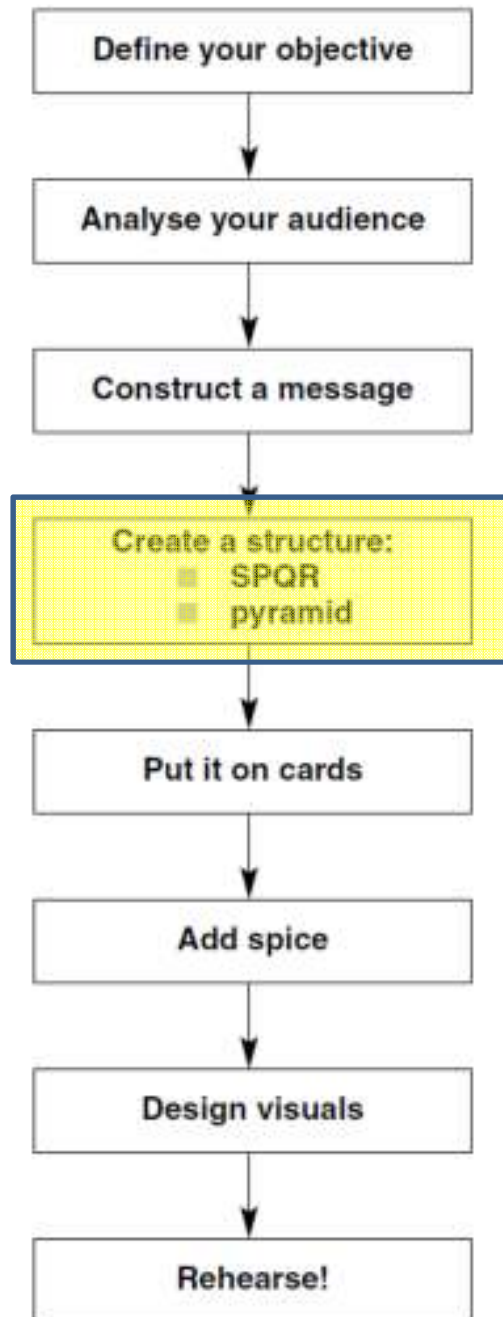
- **Analysing your audience**

- Think, too, about the audience's expectations of the presentation.
- They may see presentations often, or very rarely. They may also have specific expectations of you, the presenter: they may know you well or hardly at all; you may have some sort of reputation that goes before you.



Construct a message

- Once you have your objective, and you have some sense of who your audience is, you can begin to plan your material.
- Begin with a clear message. This message should stick in the mind of audience. Your message must:
 - ■ be a sentence;
 - ■ express your objective;
 - ■ contain a single idea;
 - ■ have no more than 15 words;
 - ■ grab your audience's attention



SPQR
Situation
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Create a structure

- Everything in the structure of the presentation should support your message.
- Remember to keep the structure of your presentation *simple*.
- The audience will forget most of what you say to them.
- Make sure that they remember your message and a few key points.

Create a structure

- Use SPQR to start the presentation, leading the audience from where they are to where you want them to be.
- This also allows you to show that you understand their situation and that you
- are there to help them.
- Using SPQR will convince them that you have put yourself into their shoes.

Create a structure

- SPQR also allows you to demonstrate your own credentials for being there. Your values and beliefs are what make you credible to the audience:
- What qualifies you to speak on this subject? What special experience or expertise do you have?
- How can you add value to the ideas in your presentation?

Create a structure

- You could begin your presentation by telling a brief story, making sure that your audience will be able to relate to it. Stories have a way of sticking in the mind long after arguments have faded.
- Choose a story that demonstrates your values in relation to the matter in hand. Beware generalised sentiment. Avoid 'motherhood and apple pie' stories. Make the story authentic and relevant. And keep it brief. You need to allow as much time as possible for your new ideas.

- Ex.
 - Suggest a story to be said at today's lecture

Create a structure

- Building a pyramid
 - Use a pyramid structure to outline your small number of key points. Show the pyramid visually: an overhead or PowerPoint slides.

Create a structure

- Repetition is an essential feature of good presentations.
- Because the audience can't reread or rewind to remind themselves of what you said, you need to build their recall by repeating the key features of your presentation.
- Aim to build the audience's recall on no more than about half-a-dozen pieces of information.

Create a structure

- Use the famous *tell 'em* principle:
- ■ Tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em.
- ■ Tell 'em.
- ■ Tell 'em what you've told 'em.

Create a structure

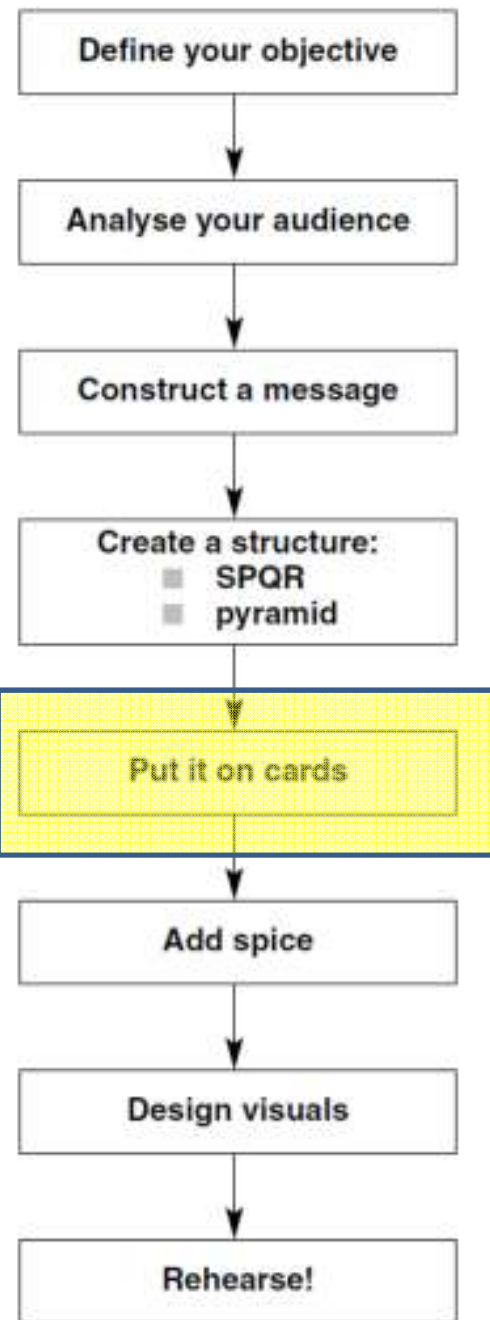
- Opening and closing the presentation
 - Once the body of the presentation is in place, you need to design an opening and close that will help you take off and land safely.

Create a structure

- The opening of your presentation should include:
 - introducing yourself – who you are and why you are there;
 - acknowledging the audience – thanking them for their time and recognising what they are expecting;
 - a clear statement of your objective or, better still, your message;
 - a timetable – finish times, breaks if necessary;
 - rules and regulations – note-taking, how you will take questions;
 - any ‘housekeeping’ items – safety, refreshments, administration.

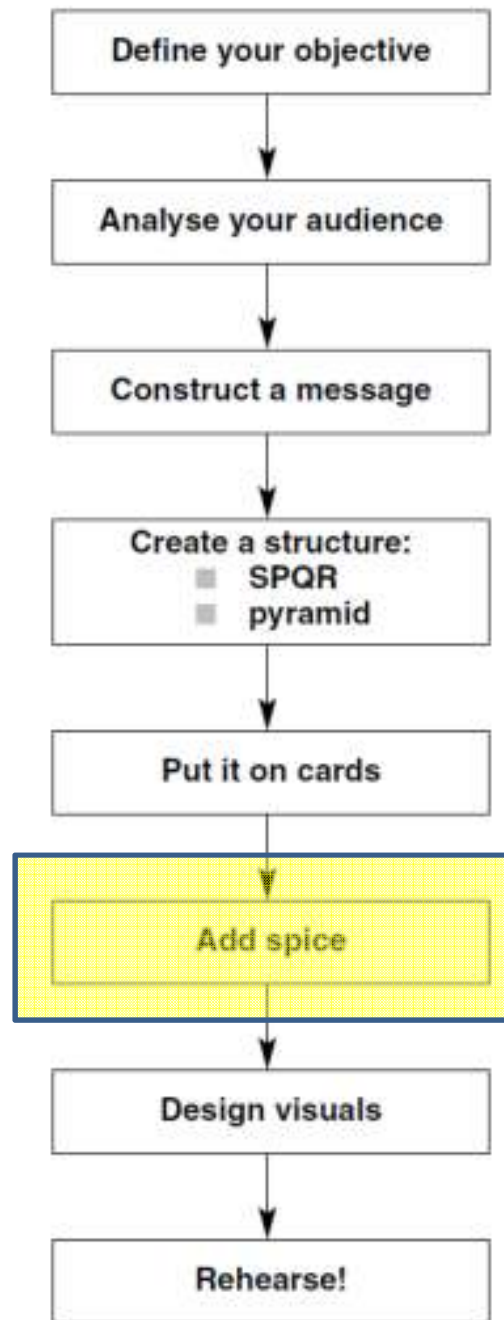
- You might decide to start with something surprising or unusual: launching into a story or a striking example, seemingly improvising some remark about the venue or immediate circumstances of your talk, asking a question.
- Sometimes it's a good idea to talk with the audience at the very start before launching into the presentation proper.

- The close of the presentation is the most memorable moment.
- This is your last chance to 'tell 'em what you've told 'em'
- Summarise your key points, and your message.
- Give a call to action.
- Thank the audience for their attention.



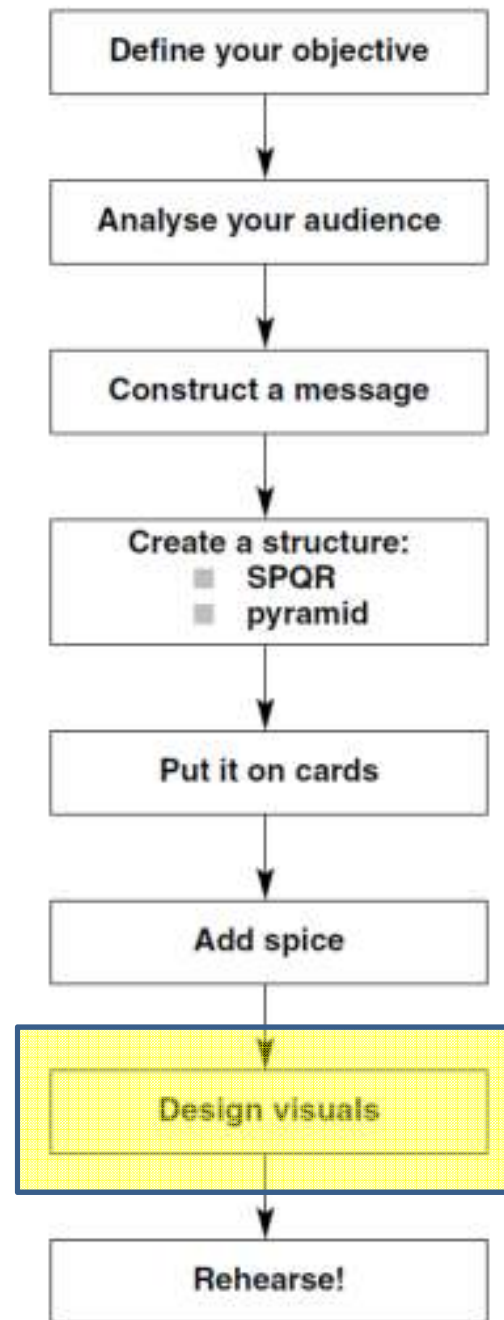
Put it on cards

- Put your ideas on to cards or power points. These are useful memory devices and will help you to bring the presentation alive.
- Include:
 - what you *must* say;
 - what you *should* say to support the main idea;
 - what you *could* say if you have time.



Adding spice

- Rack your brain for anything you can use. Think it up, cook it up, dream it up if necessary. Look for:
 - images;
 - examples;
 - analogies;
 - stories;
 - pictures;
 - jokes (but be very careful about these).



Designing visuals

- The important thing to remember is that any aid you use is there to help you, not to substitute for you. You are not a voice-over accompanying a slide presentation
- The audience wants to see you: to meet with you, assess you, ask you questions, learn about you.

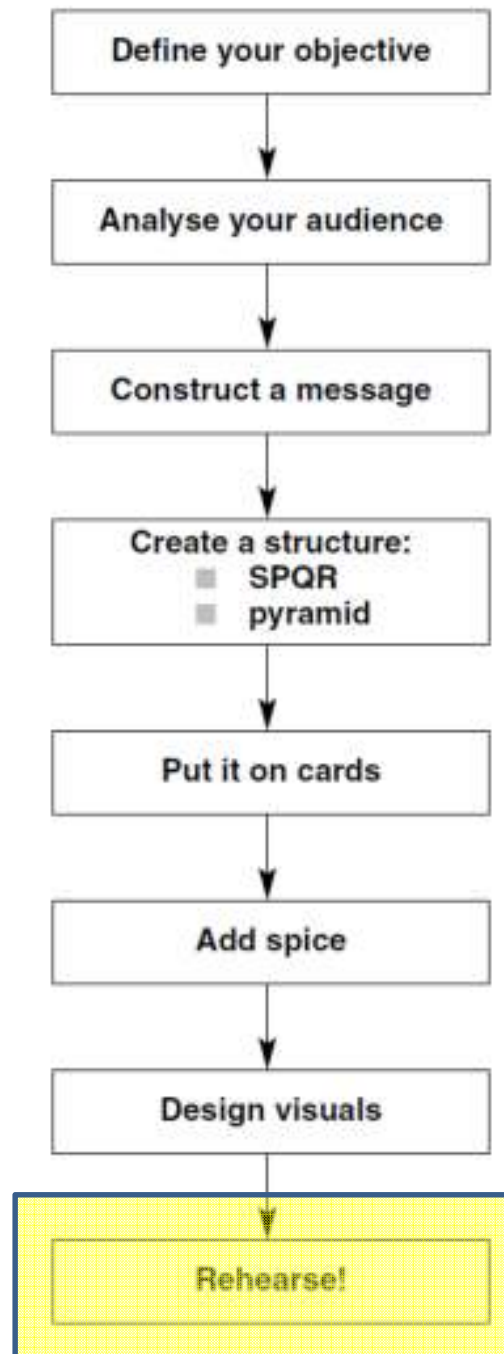
Designing visuals

- The moment you turn on the projector, the audience's attention is on that rather than you.
- A small number of excellent visual aids will have far more impact than a large number of indifferent ones.
- Don't fall into the trap of thinking that every part of the presentation should have an accompanying slide.
- You should be able to do without these things for 80 per cent of the time.

- Avoid information overload. This means:
 - use just a few visuals;
 - display only *one idea* on each.
- Remove any detail from a picture or chart that you don't need the audience to read.
- Don't simply transfer a spreadsheet or table on to a slide. Simplify.
- Words are for listening to. Visual aids are for looking at. It really is that simple.

A style guide for visual aids

- Keep the slides looking consistent in font and overall design.
- Use colour rather than black and white. Consider using white on a coloured background.
- Contrasting colours look most effective.
- Add a corporate logo.
- Use icons, drawn figures and 'clip art' with care: they are already looking like clichés.
- Keep scales and numbering systems simple and consistent.
- Select only the data that supports your argument.



Rehearsal

- Rehearsal is the reality check.
- Rehearsal is also a time check. Time acts oddly in presentations.
- It can seem to stop, to drag and – more often than not – to race away.
- Be aware that it will probably take longer than you anticipate: maybe 50 per cent longer.

Controlling the audience

- Many presenters concentrate so hard on the material that they ignore the audience.
- They have no idea of the messages that their body is sending out.
- They are thinking so hard about *what* they are saying that they have no time to think about *how* they say it.
- A few basic principles will ensure that you keep the audience within your control.

Controlling the audience

- **Eye contact**
- **Your face**
- **Gestures**
- **Movement**

Controlling the audience

- **Eye contact**

- You speak more with your eyes than with your voice.
- Your eyes tell the audience that you are confident to speak to them, that you know what you are talking about and that you believe what you are saying.
- Look at the audience's eyes throughout the presentation.
- Include the whole audience with your eyes. Many presenters fall into the trap of focusing on only

Controlling the audience

- **Your face**
 - The rest of your face is important, too! Remember to smile.
 - Animate your face and remember to make everything just a little larger than life so that your face can be 'read' at the back of the room.

Controlling the audience

- **Gestures**

- Arms and hands are prominent parts of the body and can sometimes get out of control.
- If you don't normally gesture a great deal, don't force yourself into balletic movements.
- Don't cross your hands behind your back or in front of you, and don't put them in your pockets too much.

Controlling the audience

- **Movement**

- Aim for stillness.
- This doesn't mean that you should stand completely still all the time.
- Moving about the room shows that you are making the space your own, and helps to energise the space between you and the audience.

Looking after yourself

- You certainly need time before presenting that is quiet and focused. you need to spend about 15 minutes doing nothing but preparing myself mentally.
- On some occasions it can be useful to meet the audience and chat with them before you start. This can break the ice and put you more at ease.
- Take a deep slow breath.

Answering questions

- A few guidelines can help with the question session
 - **Decide when to take questions.**
 - **Anticipate the most likely questions**
 - **Use a ‘plant’**
 - **Answer concisely**
 - **Answer honestly**
 - **Take questions from the whole audience**
 - **Answer the whole audience.**
 - **If you don’t know, say so.**

A simple format for answering a question

- Repeat the question if necessary. This helps you understand it, helps the audience to hear it, and gives you time to think about your answer.
- Give a single answer. Make only one point.
- Now give one reason for your answer.
- Give an example that illustrates the point.

Of course, it may not be easy to think of all these as you spontaneously respond to a question. But if you slow down and try to think this simple format through, you will probably answer more succinctly and clearly.